

Cultural Design with History in Mind

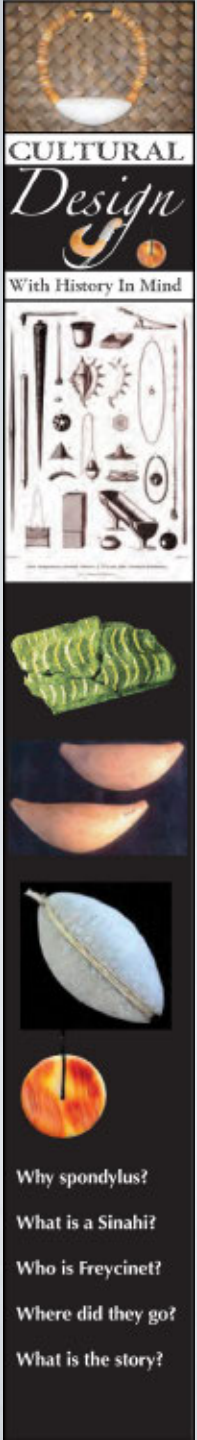
Tuesday, February 12, 2013
12:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Latte of Freedom, Adelup

Håfa Kumekelek-ña i Alåhas i Mañaina-ta? The Meanings Behind the Treasures of our Ancestors

A presentation by

Judy S. Flores

Sponsored by:



HÅFA KUMEKELEK-ÑA I ALÅHAS I MAÑAINA-TA?

THE MEANINGS BEHIND THE
TREASURES OF OUR ANCESTORS

JUDY S. FLORES
Artist and Historian

CONTEMPORARY CHAMORRO JEWELRY

A pictorial history of contemporary artists and their work

This presentation shows slides of contemporary Chamorro jewelry and ornamentation that artists are making today, and juxtaposes photos of ancient artifacts that inspired them. The art/ jewelry produced shows examples of beautiful interpretations and fine workmanship that has been inspired by ancient artifacts. They emote a sense of cultural pride and identity for those who admire and wear them.

REASONS FOR CREATING ART

— TO SHOW LINKS WITH THE PAST



Artists began to use rediscovered knowledge from archaeological digs and from History of Guam classes that began to be taught in the 1970s.

OTHER REASONS FOR CREATING ART

— NATIONALISM



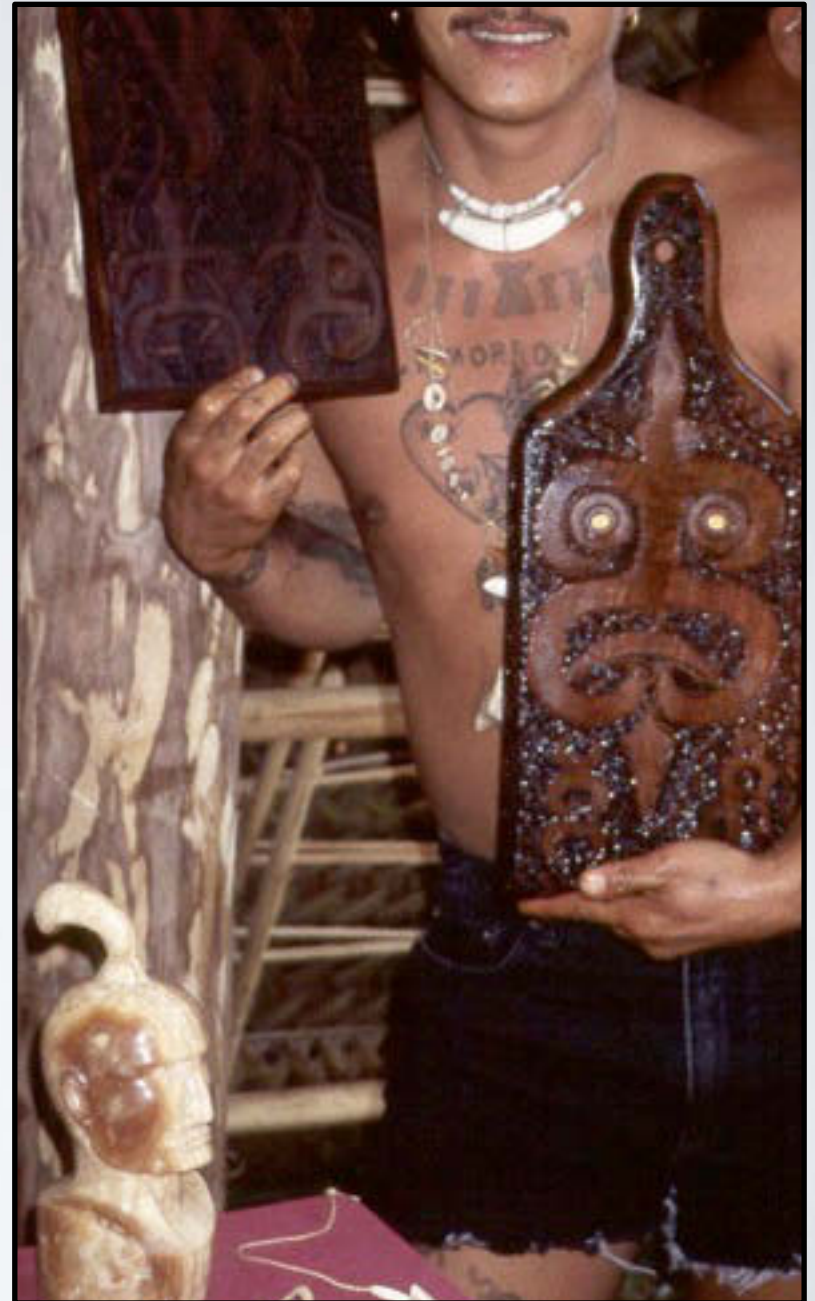
Proud Nasion Chamoru members stand in front of their display booth at the Guam Micronesia Island Fair, 1994. L-R: Danny "Pagat" Jackson, unidentified, Johnny "Matingan" Siguenza, and Ko San Nicolas.

A renaissance of Chamorro Art began with national identity movements of the 1970s. Artists & activists used art as identity symbols.

GADAO

Ifil wood carving with spondylus inlay by Frank “Ko” San Nicolas. Exhibited at Festival of Pacific Arts in Samoa, 1996

Polynesian influences are evident in the carving style, which Ko uses to depict the Chamorro legendary Chief Gadao.





TUNAS

carved sticks lashed to fishbone points by Ben Quitugua, 1998

The artist used the ancient Chamorro idea of the TUNAS - to create intricately-carved and lashed lances. Note the Spondylus inlay on near left.

ETCHED BONE FISH HOOKS

BY KO SAN NICOLAS, 1996

THE ARTIST USES THE PAN-PACIFIC IDEA OF FISH HOOKS FOR INSPIRATION.



KULEKSION PILAR

by Joe Guerrero 1996

Finely-carved and inlaid
Chamorro icons reflect
a pan-Pacific style





LIME-IMPRESSED JEWELRY

By Joe Guerrero, 1996

Etched ifil wood filled with quicklime (afok), reminiscent of ancient lime-impressed pottery.



FRANK LIZAMA working
on a fishbone carving, 1998

By 1998, bone carving was
prevalent among carvers such as
the Chamorro Crafters Group.



FISHBONE DAGGER & CARVED WOODEN SHEATH

BY JOE GUERRERO, 1998



INSPIRED FROM NATURE AND HERITAGE

An Assortment of necklaces by
Jill Benavente 1998



POLISHED SPONDYLUS AMONG HERITAGE ICONS

BY JILL BENAVENTE, 1998



Archaeological excavations of the 1970s unearthed ancient burials that inspired artists to express connections to their ancient heritage. This “Princess of Ipao” burial revealed a woman adorned with spondylus beads adorning her head, waist, across her chest, with disks hanging from her front and back.



Note the cupped pairs of spondylus strung facing each other in graded sizes. Photo courtesy of DPR-HPO div.

DANNY JACKSON & BEN SINAHİ DRESSED AS ANCIENT WARRIORS – GMIF CHAMORRO VILLAGE 2009

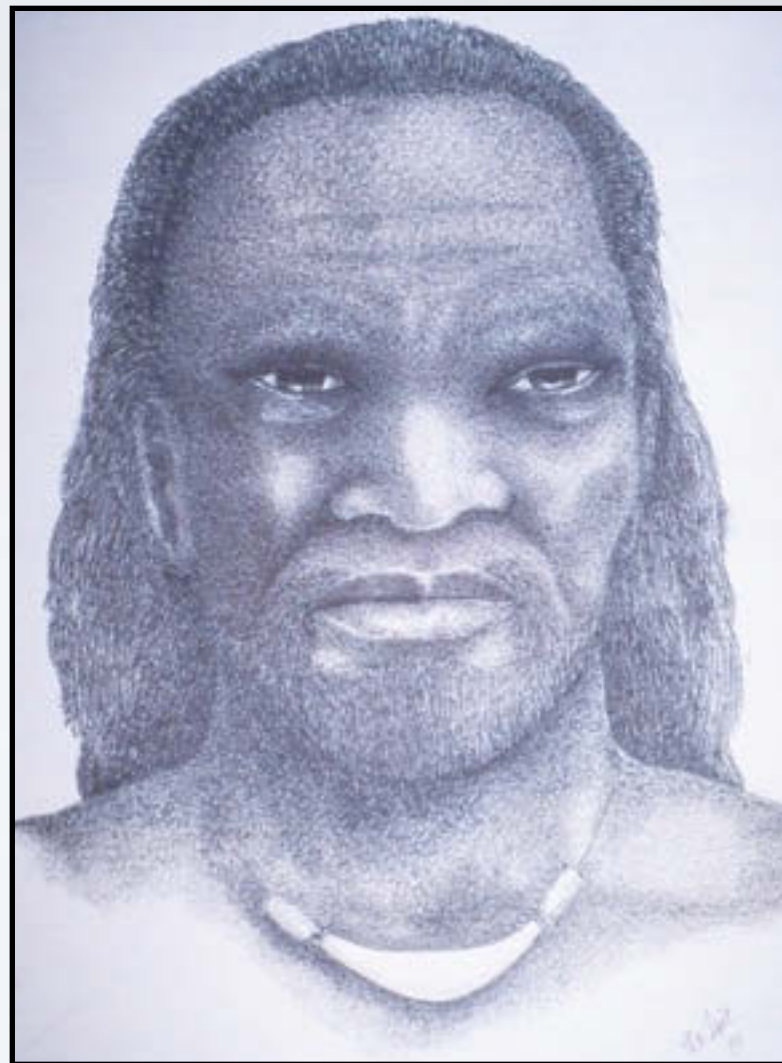
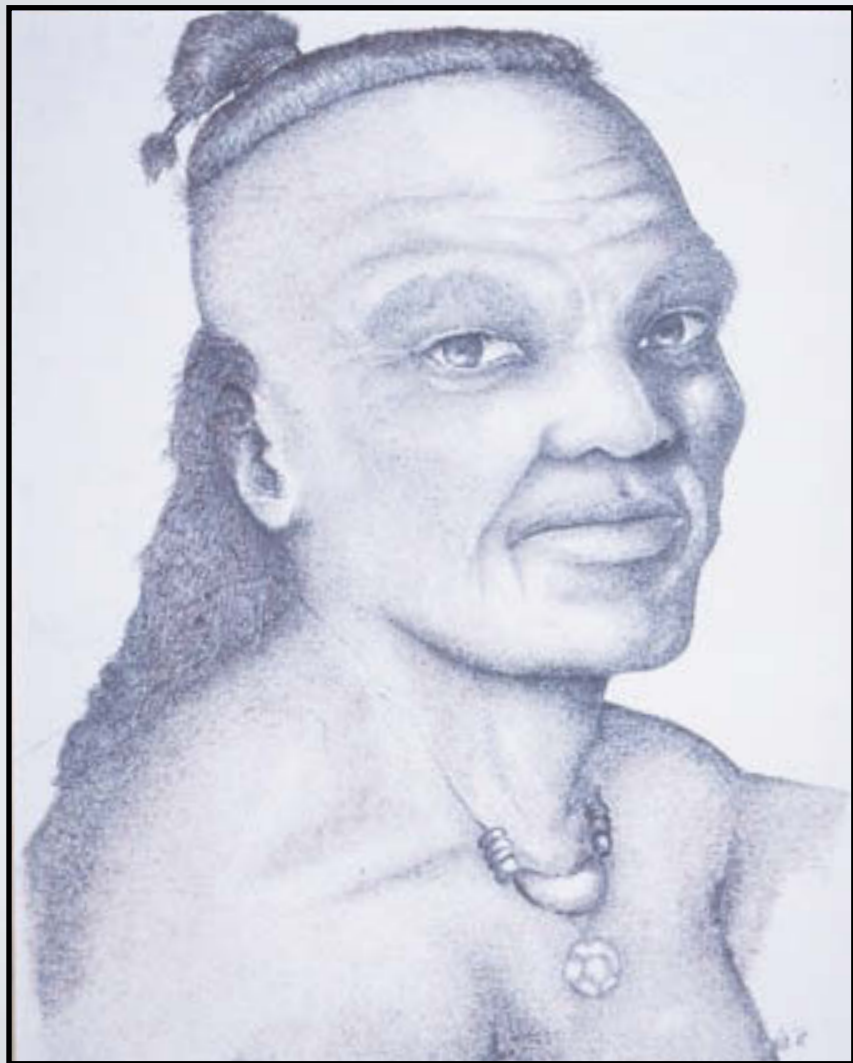
The theme of ancient Chamorro warriors is associated with the wearing of sinahi and spondylus.



MAGALAHÍ (L)AGUARIN & (R)TAGA

DRAWN BY JOE "MALA'IT" GARRIDO, 1998

(inspired by contemporary Chamorro faces)



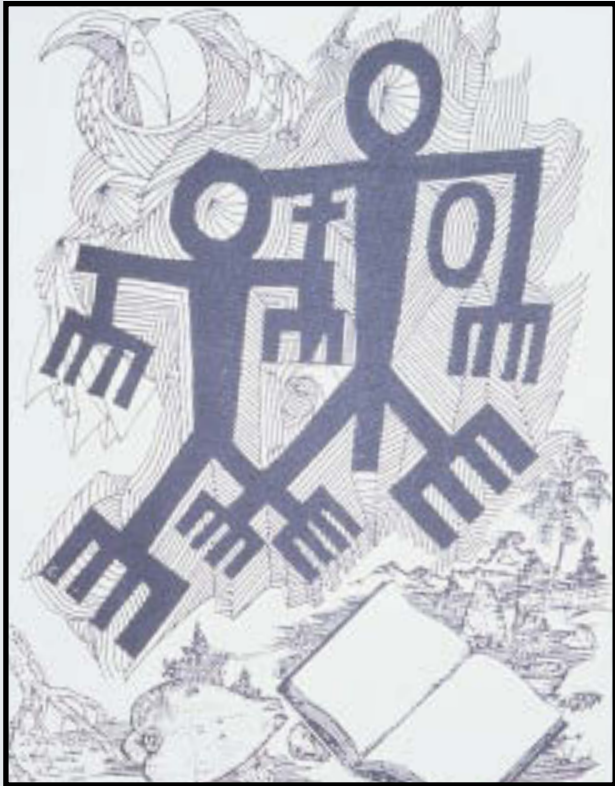
VILLORIA BROTHERS DRESSED AS ANCIENT WARRIORS, GUAM MICRONESIA ISLAND FAIR, 2009



Historical documents say that Spondylus were valued by the natives like pearls in western society. Observers say they were worn by women as a sign of wealth and high status.

Levesque (1992) Vol V., p. 68

“Gadao’s Cave” on Inalahan Bay. Elders call this cave “Literio” (Place of Writing); it has only been associated with the legendary Gadao since tourism began in the 1970s.



GADAO CAVE FIGURES. Pen & Ink drawing by Alejandro (Al) Lizama 1998

REVALUING ANCIENT VALUABLES



Ben “Sinahi” Del Rosario shows his creations of sinahi, meaning “crescent moon”, a contemporary Chamorro designation. It is made of giant clam shell. Their use in ancient times is not known and they are rare finds. Contemporary use associates it with high status value because of the difficulty making it. THE GUAM GALLERY OF ART 2000

ANCIENT “SINAHİ” ON DISPLAY IN THE BERLIN MUSEUM FÜR VOLKERKUNDE IN GERMANY.

Said to have been found by the German governor of Saipan in 1904. Several of them were tied together and stored in a pot inside a cave. Approximately 6”long from tip-to-tip. It is carved from the dense, thick hinge portion of the giant hima (Tridacna) clam. Each end has a slanted hole drilled through the tip from which a cord was probably tied. To my knowledge, there is no historical reference to any visitor ever seeing this object. Considering its carefully-worked shape and highly-polished finish, it was probably very valuable in ancient Chamorro society.



We can look to other Pacific societies to attempt to understand what this object may have been used for. In Polynesian societies, the whales' tooth was a precious item of exchange. Could the sinahi have been hung together as a display of wealth in the payment of tribute or as an exchange valuable between clans?

REVALUING ANCIENT VALUABLES



Joe Guerrero makes one-of-a-kind art pieces and replicas based on the use of natural materials and historical/archaeological artifacts and images. The above latte pendant of carved bone has a Spondylus shell inlay. The sinahi of giant clam shell shows his expertise in drilling the end holes as was done in the ancient style.

EVOLVED TRADITIONAL ART TO FINE ART



Cast bronze figure of Chamorro Warrior by Ray Peredo.



Sculpted figures from coconut leaf by Philip Sablan.

Sold in specialty shops, exhibits & galleries

CARVER GREG PANGELINAN WEARING HIS CREATION OF SINAHI INLAID WITH SPONDYLUS, GMIF 2011



Greg Pangelinan's son, Art,
displaying his sinahi and other
carvings at GMIF 2012



BONE CARVER, GEORGE FRANCISCO, DEMONSTRATING ATGMIF 2012





Flowers carved from shell –
Chamorro Crafters' Booth,
GMIF 2012

BEN “SINAHÍ” DEL ROSARIO CUSTOMIZES FOR HIS CLIENT, GMIF, 2012



SPONDYLUS INSET IN BONE BY BEN “SINAHÍ” DEL ROSARIO, 2012



4 SPONDYLUS PAIRED AND GRADED NECK ORNAMENTS BY BEN “SINAHÍ” DEL ROSARIO, 2012



SPONDYLUS PENDANTS ON FIBER CORD BY BEN “SINAHI” DEL ROSARIO, 2012



This brief overview of the artistic production since the 1970s shows that the makers of Chamorro heritage jewelry have progressed in their artistic skills to a level that can compare favorably with indigenous artists anywhere in the world. The art produced shows examples of beautiful interpretations and fine workmanship that has been inspired by ancient artifacts. They evoke a sense of cultural pride and identity for those who admire and wear them.

It is the nature of artists to be inspired by ideas and to express their inspirations with ever-increasing levels of skill and creative ingenuity. Artists by their creative nature exceed boundaries set by historical, archaeological, geographical, and many other parameters. Artistically, this is acceptable and even expected. The question each artist must answer for themselves is “what is my artistic goal?”

For those who strive to represent their indigenous heritage, certain parameters need to be set. Authentic heritage art needs to be beautiful and inspirational, but also entails the responsibility of knowing and sharing the historical significance behind the art.

So, what can we say about Spondylus based on historical observations?

Example: In ancient Chamorro society, they say mostly women wore Spondylus. Today, both men and women proudly wear it as a symbol of Chamorro heritage.

What can we say about Sinahi?

Example: We don't know how our ancestors used the object we call Sinahi today. We do know that it was so valuable that no outsider ever reported seeing it.

Today we respect the high artistic skill of our ancestors who made the Sinahi by wearing it proudly as a symbol of our Chamorro heritage.

In conclusion,

Let us honor our historians and encourage them to keep sharing their research;

Let us honor our archaeologists and encourage them to respectfully continue uncovering our past and to share their findings with us;

Let us to promote our heritage through artistic creation based on this sharing of knowledge.

SI YU'OS MA'ÅSE'



CULTURAL
Design

With History In Mind

